SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUGS -- NO 12.

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A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, chief, eastern district, Food, Drug and Insecticide Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time through WJZ, New York and the following other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company: KWK, St. Louis; WREN, Kansas City, KFAB, Lincoln; WRC, Washington; WBZA, Boston; KSTP, St. Paul; WSM, Nashville; WAPI, Birmingham, WJAX, Jacksonville; WPTF, Raleigh; WRVA, Richmond.

My friends here we are again, your Government representative telling you how your foods and drugs are safeguarded through the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act and telling you how to read labels. Have you ever felt the need to know how to read labels? I am sure you have. Then why not learn how to read labels. If you will, you may become an intelligent buyer and increase the efficiency of your home administration. Do you buy by habit? If you do, let me suggest that you change your method and buy with a certain and definite knowledge of what you want and then check your purchases by reading labels. If you will write to me, I will send you all of my free read-the-label advice. Today I am going to tell you a story about the counterfeiting of labels and I am going to tell you more about how to read labels.

My friends, money is frequently counterfeited. Uncle Sam is relentless in his fight against money counterfeiters, and practically none who engage in this hazardous venture escape the severe penalties of the law; but, my friends, money is not the only thing which is counterfeited for gain: Many nationally-known and nationally-advertised food and drug products have been counterfeited: that is, packages and labels have been identically imitated, cheap substances have been placed in these packages, and these products have been sold as the genuine at liberal discounts with tremendous profits to the operators.

Experiences under the food and drugs act would permit of the telling of a number of stories of the counterfeiting of well-known, staple food and drug products. I shall illustrate this phase of the Food and Drug enforcement work by telling you the story of the counterfeiting of an expensive tablet made of material derived in small quantities from slaughtered animals. The genuine product comes in bottles enclosed in cartons. When your speaker learned that an imitation was appearing upon the market an investigation was undertaken. It was found that a certain local market had been flooded with a spurious article made of starch and colored vegetable material put up in bottles and cartons almost identical with the original, genuine product. The printer of the imitation labels, however, had made a very, very slight mistake, and by reason of this mistake in designing the counterfeit label, it became possible subsequently to differentiate by a physical examination of the packages, between the genuine and the spurious or counterfeit article.

The Food and Drugs Act was invoked, seizures were made of outstanding lots of the spurious goods, and an effort was begun to find the counterfeiter.

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All leads showed that distribution was being made by a certain, single, small wholesale drug specialist in one of our large cities, and this distributor told the following story: He said he bought the goods from a man whose name he did not know, who called at his store with quantities of the material under his arms, that the pedlar was given cash, and no record was kept of the transaction.

This seemed a doubtful tale, but it proved to be true, for the individual responsible for this fraud was finally located, and this was how it was done: Drug tablets nowadays are always machine made, and each drug tablet machine, like each typewriter, produces results which can often be identified with the individual machine, and experts taking a drug tablet and making a careful comparison of that tablet with tablets produced by various manufacturers, can usually tell what firm manufactured the unknown tablet. This method was applied and thereby the manufacturer of the spurious tablets was located. This commercial tablet manufacturer was visited. He told a straightforward story. He produced his records of manufacture. He identified his customer; his story being, that a certain named individual, living at a certain address, had given his firm an order to produce so many million tablets, to contain certain ingredients - these ingredients were practically inert - and to be made up in exact imitation of another tablet which was furnished.

This tablet manufacturer, of course, believed that the tablet to be imitated, was his customer's own product, and so there was no reason why he should not go ahead and fill the order, which was done. Here your investigator had the whole story, knew where to find his man, and proceeded accordingly, thus breaking up a source of fraud and imposition on the public, and a source of fraud on the manufacturer of the original, legitimate product.

This illustrates how the Food and Drugs Act operates in your interest, Mr. and Mrs. Consumer, by protecting your foods and drugs from being counterfeited.

Now, my friends, my read-the-label information subject today is drugs.

The Federal Food and Drugs Act defines a drug as any medicine for either internal or external use, described in either the U. S. Pharmacopoeia or the National Formulary, and any substance intended for the cure, prevention or mitigation of disease of man or other animal.

The general public is perhaps not familiar with the U. S. Pharmacopoeia and the National Formulary. With physicians and pharmacists, however, these are the standard works. They define a great many of our common drugs, such as cod liver oil, castor oil, ether, chloroform, caffein, quinine, strychnin, morphine, magnesium citrate solution, Epsom salt, elixir iron, quinine and strychnin, and numerous others-- some well known to the public, others, such as zinc mull, less generally known.

When the food and drugs act was passed, Congress specifically made these two books the standards for the products they describe. Nearly all of the States also make these books legal standards. This guarantees, as far as law can guarantee, that when you buy tincture of iodine, for example, in a store in Boston, you get the same product that you buy as tincture of iodine

in Los Angeles. The law, however, makes an exception in its provisions which permits the sale under an official name of a drug which does not meet the standard required by these authorities, if the label clearly shows that the article is not the official product and further shows exactly what it is. For example, magnesium citrate solution is required by the Pharmacopoeia to contain 1-1/2% of magnesia and 10% of citric acid. Some manufacturers claim that this solution is too acid to suit their customers. They, therefore, desire to use a lower proportion of the expensive citric acid. The law permits them to do this but requires that the label inform the purchaser that the product which he is buying is not the article described in the U.S.P. It must further inform him just what it really is. Thus, if it contains only 9% of citric acid, the label must so state. The next time you buy a bottle of Magnesium Citrate Solution, if you want the standard pharmacopoeial preparation, read the label to be sure you are not purchasing a sub-standard product. If the label bears the statement "Magnesium Citrate Solution"U.S.P.," or simply "Magnesium Citrate Solution," you may be reasonably sure you are getting the official preparation. If the label states that the article is "Not U.S.P." it is not the product you desire.

If you want a product which differs from the official preparation, you may ascertain by reading the label whether or not any particular preparation is suitable. Sometimes the manufacturer attempts to avoid informing the purchaser of the character of the article by not calling it Magnesium Citrate Solution. He may give his product a fanciful name, such as "Tastymag". The general appearance of the package will be the same as that of Magnesium Citrate Solution and if the purchaser does not read the label, he may be deceived.

Patent medicines are not described in the U. S. Pharmacopoeia or the National Formulary. For these, therefore, there is no standard except such as the manufacturer himself chooses to set up. If he states his formula on his label, as is becoming more and more common, this statement becomes the standard and the law requires that the product be what it purports to be. Thus, a product purporting to contain extract of cod liver oil should contain the important medicinal constituents of cod liver oil. Otherwise, it is adulterated and misbranded.

The law requires that the presence of dangerous and habit-forming drugs be announced on the label. Included in this list are alcohol, such heart depressants as acetanilid and acetphenetidin, the narcotics, morphine, codeine, cocaine, and cannabis indica, and various other drugs. This law does not require the manufacturer to warn the consumer that these drugs are potentially harmful. It assumes that the consumer has this knowledge. The manufacturer, however, must not disarm suspicion by stating that his product is harmless or that it will not affect the heart, or otherwise create the impression that the medicine may be taken with impunity. The next time you buy a package of headache tablets, if you buy headache tablets, note whether or not the label bears a statement that the tablets contain a grain of acetanilid each. If this statement appears, it is the warning which the law requires the manufacturer to give you that use of the product may be attended with danger.

Finally, the law requires that the manufacturer tell the truth on his label about the effect his medicine will produce. Get your information

from the label rather than from lurid advertising in newspapers, magazines, circular letters, booklets, pamphlets, etc.

In particular, you may generally classify as a fraud any product which is conservatively labeled but extravagantly advertised. The chances are ten to one that the manufacturer is attempting to sell his product under false representations which he dares not put upon the label for fear his goods will be confiscated or that he will be called to account before the courts.

Now my friends, just one more word on drug labels. The Food and Drug Act requires packages of foods to bear a plain and conspicuous statement of the quantity of the food in the package but this requirement does not apply to drugs. However, many drug products contain quantity statements which must be true to fact when made. Likewise, manufacturers place statements on labels of the grainage of the potent ingredients in drug tablets. For example, nitro-glycerine tablets will be labeled 1/50 of a grain or 1/100 of a grain, as the case may be. Very close specification is given to all potent drugs in tablets and they are required to comply with the grainage statements on labels.

My friends, I am urging you to accept my invitation to make you intelligent label readers and, therefore, discriminating buyers. You may have all of my read-the-label information for the asking. Write W. R. M. Wharton, United States Department of Agriculture, 201 Varick Street, New York City.

Next week at this hour I shall tell you about dead horse meat and I shall tell you about vitamins. You should not miss my important "Read-the-Label" information on vitamins next week. I thank you.

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